

RIVER FUN



River Fun is the grand finale. It combines lots of learning into a few goal-oriented activities. The river of balance is your stage for some drama and excitement.

Benefits »

- ⦿ Adapts easily for various participants.
- ⦿ Offers social, imaginative, fun activities for game days.
- ⦿ Integrates many skills involved in balance.

Set It Up »

You will need many of the following items for these activities:

- ⦿ Tape
- ⦿ Agility dots
- ⦿ Poly beams
- ⦿ River treasures, such as stuffed toy frogs or prizes they can easily pick up
- ⦿ Boxes on which to set river treasures
- ⦿ Foam beams
- ⦿ Variety of balance pads
- ⦿ River stones or hedgehogs (both are available from catalogs and Web sites)
- ⦿ Sunglasses
- ⦿ Heads-up glasses

How to Do It »

Create a river challenge to match participant ability. Use masking tape for the river banks. (Make sure the tape is flat on the floor so there aren't any tripping hazards.) The banks should be close together at one end and get progressively farther apart so that the shape resembles the letter *A*. At least one of the shorelines can be wavy. There should be at least two bridges (one of tape and the other a balance beam) crossing the river. Place the appropriate items and other balance challenges inside the river.

Lazy River

Lazy River is the easiest River Fun challenge. Here are some suggestions:

- ⦿ Walk along a straight shoreline (sidestep or tandem-walk the shore).
- ⦿ Follow a wavy shoreline.
- ⦿ Cross the river at its narrowest end with a single step.
- ⦿ Cross the river at a wider point. The wider the crossing point, the more the step will begin to resemble a lunge step (belly steps).
- ⦿ Cross the river on stepping stones (agility dots) or narrow bridges (tape line).
- ⦿ Try not to get wet feet! Walk up and down the river only stepping on agility dots, taped Xs (river rocks), and other dry features.

Category 3 River

This river has intermediate challenges that are a bit more difficult than the Lazy River.

- ◉ Poly beam: Place a poly beam across the river. Participants walk across, pretending it is a narrow bridge over the river.
- ◉ Easy-to-reach river treasures: Place some of the treasures on boxes or on chairs. (Having the objects higher off the floor will make them less precarious for participants to reach.) As participants explore the river and its banks, they can reach for treasures. They can stand on the banks or on river rocks (agility dots or taped Xs) and try to pick up their treasures.
- ◉ Take lunge steps across the river: Participants go where they think they can cross without getting their feet wet.
- ◉ Work their way up the river: Participants start from the lower banks and then work their way up the river, using lunge or belly steps to cross. Cue big steps and belly button training.

Category 5 River

Advanced River Fun activities add more challenges. They also require more supervision. Be available to spot participants. You might create two rivers at this point so one is easier and the other is harder. That way everyone can make their own choice and everyone can play.

- ◉ Poly beams: Cross the river on poly beams (firm beams).
- ◉ Foam beams: Cross the river using foam beams (soft, compliant beams, such as balance pads).
- ◉ Balance pads: Place a few in the river (use a variety of densities).
- ◉ Hedgehogs: Cross by stepping on the hedgehogs.
- ◉ River treasures: Reach for river treasures placed on the floor or banks. (You could also include a high place, such as a waterfall or cliff, where they can reach up and find a treasure.)
- ◉ Kayak up the river, avoiding all the obstacles and staying in the water.



Give It More Balance »

- ◉ Space discs, stones, or hedgehogs farther apart.
- ◉ Leave more space between the beam bridges and shore.
- ◉ Sing, count, do multiplication tables, or carry something while navigating the river.
- ◉ Create an alligator pit. In the Alligator Pit, the theme and hazards change. Hedgehogs make great hidden alligators—they add the elements of time and anxiety (participants need to hurry to safety!) to make it more difficult. Depending on your group, use various kinds of bridges, dots, and river stones for participants to use as they navigate the pit.

Keep It Safe »

Participants should take turns so you can be available for balance safety and for giving cues. Everyone should have an escort in the perilous waters of balance. Always create more than one way to cross the river so people of all levels can play. Encourage, laugh, help plan, and help play. Participants know they should only do what they are comfortable doing.

Live It »

River Fun helps participants put together many of the skills they are beginning to master in balance class. It's a safe, fun place to try out those skills.